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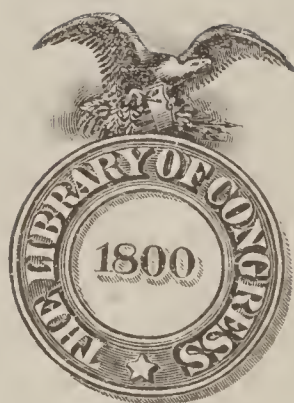
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A Funeral Discourse in
Memory of Capt. Lansing
Hollister.

By F. N. Zabriskie.
Coxsackie, N. Y.

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THE POST OF DUTY.

A

FUNERAL DISCOURSE

IN MEMORY OF

Capt. Lansing Hollister,

(120 Regt. N. Y. S. Vol.,)

KILLED AT THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURGH, JULY 2D, 1863,

—BY—

REV. F. N. ZABRISKIE,

Pastor of the 2d Ref. Dutch Church, Coxsackie, N. Y.

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FUNERAL DISCOURSE.



TEXT. "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing."—MATT. XXIV. 46.

There are many views to be taken of this world and the life we are living in it. There are narrow minds and earthward hearts, which can see no higher mission for men than to be gatherers of daily bread and shining gold. There are trifling natures, who live like the humming-bird, diving into every bright thing in the hope of finding some honeyed pleasure. Millions cannot relinquish the fond delusion that life is given them for enjoyment, and are kept forever miserable by the irreconcilable hostility between their theory and the stern reality. Most men, with a lingering trace of the old Epicurean Philosophy, can give no better account of their existence than that "it is theirs and they must e'en make the best of it." All, you see, unite on this one common ground, (and it is the radical error of them all,) that life is given for its own sake—as an

all-sufficient end, and not merely a means to something still higher or more essential.

Such is not the Christian philosophy of existence, as it comes to us in simple but profound language from the lips of the great Teacher. His eye looked down from its starry heights of Divine contemplation upon this world, as upon a great battle-plain of Duty. Over its broad surface men had their posts assigned, some here, some there—some to perform one kind of duty, some another. Some to stand afar off from the rest in solitary picket, some to act as vigilant scouts upon the outskirts, and others to stand up and fight with the great multitude. Some as officers to direct the movements of their fellows, some to equip and feed rather than stand in the ranks themselves. But all, whether directly or indirectly, to fight the good fight of Duty.

Or, (to slightly vary the illustration, so as to make it conform more exactly to the passage from which my text is taken,) Christ views us all as servants, to whom he has assigned places and duties in the world, and then withdrawn for a season, to reappear at length and call us to a strict account. Meanwhile, those servants are behaving in very different spirit. There are two sorts of them—evil servants, and faithful and wise ones. The former spend their time in selfish and oftentimes criminal indulgence, seeking their own and not their Master's. The latter, mindful of their relations to their Lord, are found in their places, diligently performing their

parts. And "Blessed," says that voice which shall pronounce our doom at the Eternal Judgment, "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing."

Fellow-immortals, I have no purpose to expand and thus dilute the words of Him who spake as never man spake.—But, standing here by the remains of a fallen comrade in the ranks of life, I wish to lay my finger successively on certain words in this great octave of Truth spoken by our Savior, and draw forth the inspiring music there is in them. As we are to stand together once again before the Great White Throne, I charge you to remember these things. And remember, first, that

You and I are *servants* of the Lord God Almighty. Our repudiation or neglect of our duties does not alter that relation. We may be "unprofitable" or even "evil" servants, but servants we are, all the same. We may be working only for ourselves and letting God's work lie waste, in our own hearts and in the world around us. We may be working directly against God, and making extra work for those who are faithful. We may be shirking the labor, and still expecting the wages. But we do not alter in the least our position or our obligations. The task lies there inexorably before us, whether done or undone. Our post assigned is yonder, even though we have deserted it or are sleeping at it.

What answer does conscience give to this first note which I ring out from my Savior's words? I

have heard the Calliope, as I passed down the river, draw forth from the echoing headlands sounds as clear and melodious as if the happy spirits of the hills were singing for us; then again, shrieks as wild and awful as if we were nearing the gates of hell. Methinks these words of Jesus must evoke a like response from all our consciences, just in proportion as we have lived on earth for self or duty.

Yes, *duty*! In that small and simple and (perhaps it may seem to you) stern word is comprised the secret of this strange but interesting Problem, which we call Life. That word is the keynote of the solemn music that floats upward from our Savior's words, as I press with trembling finger the text before me.

"Tis not the whole of life to *live*."

If so, the longest life would be the most desirable and successful one. But, even as books and pictures are not valued according to their size nor yet the decorations of their frame and cover, but by the degree in which they serve the object of their authors; so this life of ours is to be measured not by years but by deeds, by the degree in which it has accomplished the end for which our great Task master gave it to us.

Duty! it is a grand word, forbidding to the trifler or the rebel in God's service but to be lovingly had in reverence by all the true and the good. The touchstone that reveals all hearts, dividing the

sheep from the goats. A rugged path and narrow—and he who treads it must take up his cross, for he follows Jesus. The few who walk that way will seldom find it running parallel to the will of the flesh or the way of the world. Consequently, they will be called to deny self and to relinquish the applause of men. The soldier of Duty must make up his mind to “endure hardness”—to encounter frowns, persecutions and toils—to abnegate self all along the way, and perhaps at the end to lay down his life. But it is nevertheless a glorious path! He is following the voice of God, that grows more and more distinct as he advances. He is listening to the angel and not the animal or the devil within himself. His path is an upward one, and at every step he is leaving the world behind and rising into clearer, calmer regions of peace and nobleness. He is following in the track of all the best and bravest who have walked the earth—the glorious company of the Apostles—the goodly fellowship of the prophets—the noble army of martyrs—an innumerable cloud of witnesses for God, of whom the world was not worthy. Nay, he

“Walks the same path the Saviour trod,
The path to glory and to God.”

Yes,

“Blessed is he who can divine
Where real right doth lie,
And dares to take the side that seems
Wrong to men’s blindfold eye.

O ! learn to scorn the praise of men !
 O ! learn to lose for God !
 For Jesus won the world through shame,
 And beckons thee his road."

What a solemn question then it becomes for each of us, my fellow-servants, "What post of duty has my God assigned to me?" It is *the* question of life, including and involving all subordinate considerations of home and occupation and rank and worldly condition. It is not to be decided without wrestling prayer for divine enlightenment and rigid scrutiny of our own motives, nor yet without a careful review of that field which is no less broad than the world, and of our own adaptations and the calls of Providence. It usually is found close at hand. It always is, until we see a better reason to go elsewhere. But it may be in a far different sphere, higher or lower in the estimation of men. He, who listens for the voice of God in Providence and conscience and in the groans of a suffering world, will not be long in determining.

Let it not be taken for granted that the path of duty lies outside the common, daily walks of life. Sometimes the great Captain details certain chosen followers for special duty. He has given to some to be Apostles, orbs which he filled with his own reflected radiance and sent out into all the world to light up the darkness of its night; and to some Prophets, standing out in the ages when they lived like Chimborazos and Mt. Blancs to lift the gaze of men to Heaven and to herald on their

lofty peaks the coming dawn; and to some Evangelists, to leave their country and their father's house and, taking their lives in their hands, to be God's skirmishers among the outposts of His enemy and ours. But ordinarily He calls men to be simply merchants and farmers and mechanics and laborers—to be fathers and mothers, and sons and daughters—to be housewives and school children, neighbors and church members and Sabbath School Teachers and office-holders in Church or State. Sometimes, as in these tumultuous days, we are called to take our share of the perils and privations of war; but usually we are left to tread the paths of peace, requiring oftentimes as brave a spirit. Sometimes he calls men to die for him, (alas! our saddened hearts cannot forget that to-day,) but ordinarily he calls us to live for him—to fill up faithfully and usefully the place he has given us in the safe and level round of everyday existence.

Let us each be sure, then, that we are at the post of duty to which God has assigned us; that we are not shutting our eyes to his beckoning finger nor our ears to his animating call. For only thus can we expect the blessing. And then, let us be sure that we straggle not from our place in the ranks nor slumber in our sentry box. Let this be our motto, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might."

"Oh! sleep not then as others do!
Awake, be vigilant, be brave!"

The coward, and the sluggard too,
Must wear the fetters of the slave."

For, my fellow-servant, *our Lord is coming!* He, who bade the world farewell on the slope of Olivet, shall come again in the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see Him. In that far country whither he has gone, though concealed from us, we have not been concealed from him. And he will be as rigid in calling us to account as he was gracious in assigning us posts of honor and of duty in his service. Strangely the whole world slumbers and sleeps during his absence, the wise and foolish virgins alike. And yet we know not the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh. At any hour of the day or night—amid the peaceful stillness of the Sabbath or the busy scenes of week-day toil that cry, "He cometh!" may peal across our sky; and "as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so the coming of the Son of Man shall be."

But the Master may not bid us tarry till he come. He may send for us where he is. But whether we go to him or he come to us, whether Death or the 2nd Advent be his under Sheriff to summon us to Judgment, it is all the same. There is the same uncertainty about the one event as the other. We know not what a day may bring forth. The missiles of death are flying through this quiet village as truly as on the battle-field of Gettysburgh. There is one event unto all. There are no exemptions in this

war. Inexorable Death has no tenderness towards the babe or the grey-haired man. He vindicates his sovereignty by striking down the strongest, and his ruthlessness by taking the fairest. It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after that the Judgment.

Yes, Hearer, the Lord cometh. "He cometh to judge the world in righteousness, and the people with his truth." And let every soul of man respond "Amen! Even so come, Lord Jesus!" And let every one awake to ask himself the question, Am I ready for his appearing? For

"Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing." And what does that mean? Why, simply doing his duty, at the post where the great Commander has assigned him, and doing faithfully the work which belongs to his station in the fear of God and in the faith of Christ. Verily, I say unto you, He shall make that servant ruler over all his goods. He shall promote that soldier to a proportionately high command in the armies of heaven. He that has faithfully served on earth shall judge angels.

My friends, it is a very simple thing. I reveal unto you no mystery. It is a very simple thing to be found "so doing." Religion or Duty is nothing more nor less than this—doing the will of our Father who is in heaven, doing it with reference to every charge he has given us to keep and every post where He has stationed us. He has given

you a *soul*—and this is the will of God, even your salvation. That soul is a pearl of great price, the most precious treasure which he has committed or could commit into your hands. As his servant, you are to see that it be not lost, but restore it to him richer and fuller of celestial light and beauty than he gave it. God has given you a place in his church, and has said “go *work* in my vineyard.” See that you are no idler there. God has given you a country—see to it, that the wild boar out of the woods do not break through its hedges and despoil its fair enclosures. God has given you a Government, and said “the Powers that be are ordained of me,” See to it that you sustain them, as the ordinance of heaven. God has given you a Union, spanning the Continent like a rainbow of hope to the world. See to it that when your earthly citizenship shall end, as ye hope to inherit a better country, ye transmit this unsevered to your posterity. God has placed you, Oh strong man, where you may help the weak ; Oh freeman, where you may defend the oppressed ; Christian, where you may enlighten the darkness of a world and send his saving health among all nations. See to it that you pass not by on the other side, nor coldly ask “who is my neighbor ?”

Ye Servants of the Lord,
 Each in his office stand,
 Observant of his heavenly word
 And watchful of his hand.

13

Watch! tis your Lords command—
And while we speak, he's near.—
Mark the first signal of his hand,
And ready all appear!

O! happy servant he,
In such a posture found!
He shall his Lord with rapture see,
And be with honor crowned.

These are the thoughts which rolled through my mind, as soon as the sad and startling tidings were borne to us from the bloody field of Gettysburgh, that Lansing Hollister had fallen. And the lesson is as freshly graven in my mind and conscience to-day as on that terrible morning. God grave it deeply and enduringly on every one of yours!

I do not claim for Capt. Hollister your admiration for any of those gifts of genius or for any of those conspicuous achievements, which lift men up to a preeminence among their fellows. What advancing years might have developed, I have no means of conjecturing. He was but a stripling of less than twenty-three when his earthly career was suddenly arrested. But I do claim for him the reverent honors of all, who can appreciate the nobility there is in fidelity to duty. As I look back over his brief career, I feel that this is the simple but sublime lesson which it teaches to us all, and especially to his young contemporaries. This one glorious word he

being dead yet speaketh—Duty! Live and, if need be, die for duty! Young men of Coxsackie! Young men of Claverack! You, whose services in the field have made you the young men of America, and some of whom have stood beside him in the hail of battle! Heed those noble words from the friend, the schoolmate and the comrade, whom you will never see again on earth.

Yes! Lansing Hollister's was a straight-forward life of duty. He was dutiful to his *parents*. "He never gave us an unkind word," is their unsolicited testimony to his filial conduct from earliest childhood. And who, that ever looked into his mild blue eye or observed his gentle and manly bearing at all times, but will be prepared for such a testimony. It is in the home that the character is at once formed and displayed, which is to mark the career of the man in all the subsequent relations of life. A good son will make a good citizen, a good soldier, a good captain and the best christian.

He was faithful to duty in his *school-life*. The presence of his respected Teacher and of his fellow students is sufficient attestation of the respect with which his memory is cherished by them. They feel that a new honor has been reflected upon the Hudson River Institute by the brief but worthy career of its late pupil. He was faithful to the duties of a *soldier*. In times of peace, he would have been one of our most valued and useful citizens. But he was called to take his part among men at a time,

when the liberties of his native land were threatened by the most powerful rebellion in history. Though in a course of training for a very different kind of life, he broke loose at once from his studies, feeling that his country called just now for soldiers more than scholars. He enlisted as a private in the famous 44th N. Y. In this brave band of picked men he soon approved himself one of the bravest and best, and was rapidly rising in the line of promotion when taken sick. His constitution seemed so shattered that it was deemed prudent to give him a discharge. But gradually recovering his health, his patriotic zeal would not let him remain at home, and he met the call of Government by attempting to raise a company last summer. We all know how patiently and perseveringly he toiled for this end, and how at last his efforts were crowned with success. And when we bade him a proud farewell, as his tall and martial form passed by at the head of his gallant company to the scenes of danger, our hearts and hopes went with him. Nor have we been disappointed or shamed by his subsequent career. Every report, which has come to us from the camp or the battlefield, has borne testimony alike to his popularity and efficiency. Says one, who has mingled much with his men and seen much of their young Captain, "There is not an officer in the Army of the Potomac more beloved and respected, nor one more brave and capable than Lansing Hollister." It manifests no ordinary qualities of mind

and character, that a youth of twenty-two should have maintained such an ascendancy over a company composed of those who had mostly known him from his boyhood. It indicates a union of firmness, kindliness and ability of no common order. *

But, far above even his fidelity as a soldier and an officer, shines his Patriotism. He was faithful in the duty he owed his *country*. The conspiracy, which aimed at the life and glory of his native land, was hateful and hideous to him. Consequently, he was incapable of calmly looking on and coldly criticizing those who were doing all in their power to save it, while the foundations of all that is precious to this nation and to humanity were being undermined. He sprang up at the call of the Government, recognizing it as the call of God, saying, "Here am I. Send me!" He was willing cheerfully to fling his young life into the breach, and abide all the hazards of the most destructive war which was ever waged on earth. And he offered himself none the less willingly, because he believed that in maintaining the liberties of his own race, he was aiding to redeem and elevate the oppressed and poor of another. Thank God, that the spirit of the Master was in thee, young hero!—the Master, who shall say,

*[NOTE. I am informed that Capt. Hollister's superiority as a tactician was so conspicuous, that he was frequently called to drill not only the men belonging to other companies, but even the officers of his Regiment. I am also informed, that in battle he would not content himself with directing others but would seize musket and fight shoulder to shoulder with his men.]

“Forasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.”

And this leads me to say, finally, that he was faithful in the duty he owed his *God*. Lansing Hollister was a Christian. In the days of his youth he remembered his Creator. He did not wait till life should be a burden to throw it on the Lord. But he gave God the very bloom and dew of his youth. And, having made this consecration of himself as a penitent and believing sinner to his Redeemer, he was not long in avowing it. Like a good soldier of Jesus Christ, he flung his banner to the air and arrayed himself upon the Lord's side. A little more than two years ago he stood, in all the vigor of youth, on the very spot where his lifeless form reposes to-day, and enlisted in the ranks of that militant church who have vowed to follow Jesus in life and in death. And I am yet to learn that, from that hour to this, he has been recreant to his vow or brought dishonor upon his glorious Leader. Thus, then, in every relation of life Lansing lived for duty. It only needed that he should crown such a life by a corresponding death, to make his brief career as complete as it was beautiful. Nor was this seal of completeness wanting. When he *died*, he died as he had lived—for duty. He fell at the post of duty; died bravely, with his face to the enemies of his country, interposing his manly form as a shield for you and me against the danger which rolled up as an engulfing whirlwind upon our Northern States; died, as his

superior officer testifies, "gallantly leading his men."

Ah! it was a glorious death. It is always sweet and honorable to die for one's country. But to die for such a country and for such a cause! To die at the very moment of victory—victory at last for the dauntless but sore tried Army of the Potomac! Yes, and at the moment, above all, which the historian will record as the hour that struck the knell of victory for the Union and doom for the Rebellion; when, from the Potomac to the Mississippi, at Gettysburgh and Helena, at Vicksburgh, at Shelbyville and at Port Hudson, a great shout of triumph went up from the armies of Liberty, and the flags of the Confederate Despotism went down, never to rise again on the soil they had so long desolated and disgraced.

It is considerations like these, which transform the otherwise mournful aspects of this day into a triumph. It is considerations like these, which sustain the bereaved hearts of parents and kindred in this trying hour. I know that a parent's heart alone "knoweth its own bitterness;" Rachel weeping for her children refuses to be comforted because they are not. But I know also that I address those who can appreciate the thought, that death, however early it comes and however much of bloom and promise it cuts down, is far from being the worst of calamities. I know that the father who could say, though his heart was crushed with personal bereavement, "I bade him God-speed when

he left me, and if it were to be done over again I would do no different,' is not unsustained amid his sorrows. It is not every parent, who is privileged to make so large and costly an offering to country and liberty, to God and humanity. It is not every parent, who can lay to heart the sweet consolation, "My son lived and died for duty?" "How many fall as sudden, not as safe." Far worse than death to have a coward, a traitor, or a sympathizer with traitors for a son!

Nor is there one of us, who may not be instructed and animated by the lesson of this brief, but brave and beautiful career. I think, that we must all go away feeling anew the earnestness and seriousness of life, despising the ends of selfishness and folly, and thrilling with the superiority and nobleness of a life consecrated to Duty. I think we must all be quickened in our devotion to that cause, which has been made doubly sacred by the blood of Lansing Hollister. I think we must all murmur the earnest prayer, "Let me die the death of the righteous—and may my Lord, when he cometh, find me too at the post of duty, my face to the foes of truth and righteousness, and my heart at peace with God!"

Our young hero, as he lay dying in the arms of a comrade, (whose kindness to him and to others deserves the lasting gratitude of all who prize the comfort of our brave boys,) had time and consciousness to leave but one message. "Bear me," he said, (and oh! what tender recollections must have rolled over

his spirit at that moment,) "Bear me to my home, and lay me among the green graves of my fathers."

By the favoring providence of God and the prompt activity and kindness of friends, we are enabled to fulfil thy dying wish to-day, my brother. Amid that stillness of reverent applause, which is so much deeper than the noisy plaudits of the world—surrounded by the insignia of the cause for which thou offeredst up thy life, and the honors of a grateful community—we bear thee, with proud and swelling hearts, with a soldier's honors to a soldier's grave. Farewell, young hero! Thou hast not lived in vain. Long years after this congregation shall have followed thee to the tomb and perhaps have been forgotten, men, as they look with pride over the magnificent heritage of freedom which thou and others like thee preserved and redeemed by their valiant deeds and martyr deaths, shall visit thy grave among the hills, and teach their children to speak proudly and lovingly the name of —LANSING HOLLISTER.

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